Sh. BEYSHENALIEV

THE HORNED LAMB

Aziz

Aziz is the son of a shepherd. Summer and winter he lives high up in the mountains on the grazing lands. All day long the boy's father tends the sheep, while his mother stays in the big felt-covered tent cooking food and mending clothes. When evening comes she helps drive the sheep into the sheep-fold for the night.

The last of the sheep had just been driven in. The boy's father came into the tent, picked up little Aziz and began tossing him up in the air.

"Stop! You'll drop him!" cried his worried mother.

"A shepherd's son should be fearless and strong," laughed his father. "He'll soon grow up and ride like the wind, he'll be a real shepherd!"

Aziz's mother stretched her arms towards him, calling:

"Come here, come to me."

But Aziz felt much too good with his father: he was so big and strong, his quilted robe smelled of campfire smoke and sheep's wool.

One fine morning his father said: "I'm taking Aziz with me to the pasture today."

"No, he's too little," said his mother.

They argued a while and decided that whoever Aziz ran to would have him. So they put Aziz between them in the middle of the tent and each began to call the boy.

"Aziz! Come to me!"

Aziz looked at his mother, at her outstretched arms, and saw how tenderly she watched him.

Then he looked at his father, at the big palm held out. Unable to resist, he rushed to his father.

"I'll teach you to ride and tend the sheep," his father said to him.

They left the tent. His father mounted his horse, putting Aziz in front, and they rode towards the big flock of sheep, talking happily.

But his mother remained by the tent door, looking after them. Then she poured some milk into a jug, put some bread in a bag and set out after them.

Aziz Becomes a Shepherd

Ever since Aziz made his first trip to the grazing lands, there was nothing in the world he liked better than to sit in the saddle with his father and tend the sheep.

Living in the tent by his mother's side, he had seen nothing at all, only sheep. But now . . . .

Now, poking his head out of his father's robe like a baby quail from its nest, Aziz sat on the velveteen saddle-cloth on top of a huge horse.

The horse rocked him. It was like a cradle. Aziz thought he was much taller than before. Even the mountains, which had always frightened him, no longer seemed so terrible but quite beautiful now that he saw them close up.

When he first touched the leaves on the trees, Aziz waved his hands in delight.

"Look at the tree! Oh!"

"That's a fir tree ... that's a birch ... that's a juniper ... that's a sweet-briar.... And that's a honeysuckle...." His father named the trees and bushes.

"A fir tree ... a birch ... a juniper ..." Aziz repeated after him.

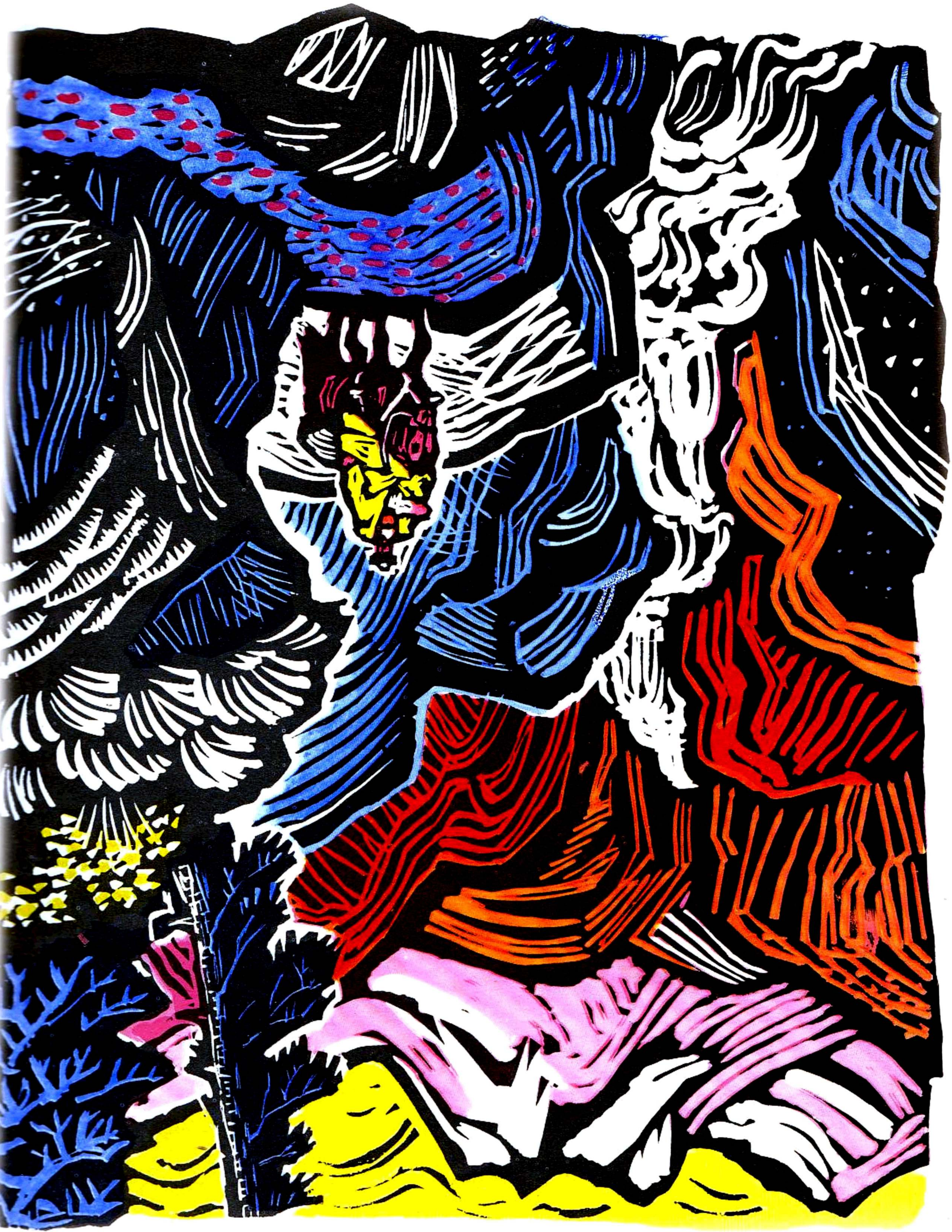
He wanted to learn them all at once. But how could you possibly tell them apart so quickly!

As they rode round a big bluff, Aziz saw a waterfall dropping down the cliffs. The water was white with foam, it filled the air with a thunderous roaring.

"Look at the water!" Aziz shouted.

His father pulled up the horse and rumpled the boy's curly hair.

"That's a waterfall," he said, smiling.



Aziz looked at his father in wonder.

"A waterfall?"

"Yes. Waterfall means *the water falls.* See it falling from the cliffs up there?"

"Waterfall! Waterfall!" cried Aziz, his voice drowned out by the thunder of the falling water.

Every day Aziz and his father rode into the mountains. And every day the boy discovered something new.

Aziz Misses His Father

Now that Aziz rode off with his father for the whole day, his mother missed him very much. However, after a while she got used to it.

"All boys like their fathers best," she decided and felt better.

In the evenings, when father and son drove the sheep down from the pastures, Aziz's mother would come to meet them. She would lift Aziz off the horse and carry him into the tent, a tired, happy boy. Aziz would fall asleep at once and dream about waterfalls, the blue spruce tree high in the mountains and the sheep.

One morning his mother did not awaken him. When Aziz woke up he began to cry and call for his father. He wanted to run after him into the mountains.

His mother set all kinds of tasty food before him, she told him stories. But Aziz kept saying: "I want to go to Father! I want to go to Father!"

She could do nothing to make him happy. From then on his mother woke him up every morning and helped him get ready to go into the mountains with his father.

then jumped up and grabbed the ram's thick fleece with both hands. Big Grey, who had been standing quietly until then, suddenly took fright and started to run, dragging Aziz along the grass. Aziz wouldn't give up. He held on tight to Big Grey's neck. At last his strength gave out and he let go.

Big Grey stopped, waggled his head and suddenly kicked the boy in the leg with his sharp hoof. Aziz jumped up angrily, he wanted to catch Big Grey, but his leg would not hold him. Then everything whirled in his head and he fell.

Watching from a distance, his father became frightened and ran towards the boy. Aziz lay motionless on the grass. There was blood on his leg.

His father bent down, gently lifted Aziz up and carried him back.

How Aziz Got Better

For several days Aziz had to stay in bed. His mother never left his side. Now no one could keep her from looking after her son. She made him the tastiest dishes: *kuurdak,** *manti*** and *beshbarmak.****

But Aziz did not care for such a life. He was tired of lying in bed. He wanted to go to the grazing lands with his father.

* *Kuurdak*—stewed lamb.

** *Manti*—meat dumplings.

*** *Beshbarmak*— diced lamb and noodles.

One morning Aziz woke up to see his father sitting by his bed. He sat up, grabbed his father's hand and pleaded:

"I want to go with you! Let's go!"

"All right, son," his father said. "We'll be going soon. Mother, where are his things?"

His father mounted his horse, settled Aziz in front on a soft cushion, and they were off, but not to the pasture. They were heading the other way.

"Where are we going?" asked Aziz.

"To the village," his father said.

Aziz suddenly felt wonderful, even his sore leg stopped hurting. Perhaps it was the fresh air, or the fast ride.

They rode on for a long time, heading down into the valley. At last they came to the shores of a lake. There were many white tents there. His father dismounted and carried Aziz into one of them.

The tent turned out to be a shop. There were so many surprising things in it, it made the boy's eyes pop. A man with a moustache and kind, merry eyes sat behind a counter. He rose when they came in and greeted them politely. Aziz's father said a few words to him, and the man nodded. He winked at Aziz and went behind a partition.

He returned carrying a small brown suit and brown boots.

"Here you are, Bekir!" said the shopman. "Just the thing for your boy!"

Aziz caught his breath. Was all this really for him?

His father smiled, took some money from his pocket, counted out the amount and handed it to the shopman.

"Now then, weigh us some sweets for this young fellow."

The shopman winked at Aziz again, then put some sweets and cookies on the scales. He dumped them all into a big paper bag and gave it to the boy's father.

Father and son left the shop and went into another tent.

Aziz liked this one even more. He had never seen such a clean tent before. And it smelled good, too!

A girl in a white smock stood up to meet them. Aziz decided she was in charge of this shop, and was looking forward to the shopping to come.

But things turned out differently. His father whispered something to the girl and then said loudly:

"Come on, Aziz, let's try on your new suit!"

The girl swung Aziz up on a padded seat covered with a white sheet and began taking off his boots. Only then did he realise that the girl was not a shopgirl at all, but a doctor.

While his father changed the boy's clothes, she looked at his wound, painted on some kind of medicine, and bandaged it.

It hurt, but Aziz did not utter a sound.

"I see you're a real hero!" the girl said and smiled. "Well, try to stand on it now. Don't be afraid."

She helped Aziz to stand up and gave him a little push.

He could hardly keep from falling, his legs were so weak. Then he took a step, and another one, and another. A few minutes later he had practically forgotten his leg hurt.

The girl in the smock gave his father some medicine and told him what to do.

"The dressing must be changed every other day. He'll be better soon."

I Made You Give Up, Big Grey!

"Wait a while," Aziz's father said. "We'll fix that grey ram yet."

And Aziz waited. He was excited, he was in a hurry to teach Big Grey a lesson, to get back at him for hurting his leg.

One day, when Aziz was quite well again, his father said: "Get ready. You come with me today. It's time to teach Big Grey who's the master."

Aziz grabbed a whip off the wall and said:

"I'll give him a beating, right?"

His father shook his head in reproach.

"No. We'll simply let him know who's the master here. Then he'll be tame and mild. If you're afraid, say so now, I don't want you to back out later."

"I'm not afraid," Aziz said stoutly, though his heart thumped loudly.

Father and son left the tent and went out to the herd. The grey ram stopped grazing and stared at Aziz.

Aziz stopped to watch. His father started for the ram, he was going to catch him. But Big Grey jumped away and ran off. The frightened sheep scattered. Aziz's father caught up with Big Grey, he grabbed the ram by the hind leg and jumped on his back. The ram began to buck like a wild horse. He threw himself from side to side, he galloped, he trotted. He twisted and leaped several times. But he could not throw off such an experienced rider!

However, a ram is not a horse. Soon Big Grey wore himself out and

From that day on Aziz hardly ever left his baby lambs. He fed them close by the tent.

There was one lamb that Aziz was especially fond of. It was as white as snow. Aziz named it Snowball. It was the sweetest and brightest lamb of them all. Aziz had only to call "Snowball! Here, Snowball!" and the white lamb would come running, followed by the other lambs.

Day after day the lambs grazed in the steppe, they grew and gained weight. But one little lamb did not do as well as the rest. He was a grey lamb with tiny, curving horns. None of the others had horns, only the little grey one. "Maybe that's why he's so thin?" Aziz wondered, and decided to ask his father's advice.

His father brought a big sack into the tent.

"There are rolled oats here for weak or sick lambs," he said. "Feed some to your little grey lamb."

Aziz took a capful of oats to the little horned lamb, but it refused to eat and tossed its head angrily.

Then Aziz grabbed it by its horns and put a handful of oats into its mouth. No sooner did Little Horny taste the oats than he stretched towards the cap and began munching the rest greedily. Aziz did not leave his pet until the oats were all gone.

Then he went to a nearby spring, brought back a capful of water and offered it to Little Horny.

"Here, have a drink! Come on! I want you to get used to eating and drinking out of my hand."

Little Horny reached for the cap and began to drink.

"Snowball! Snowball, come here!" Aziz called to the white lamb.

Snowball came over slowly. He was probably jealous of the grey lamb. He sniffed suspiciously at Little Horny, who was now lying on the grass, warming himself in the sun. The other lambs sniffed, too. Aziz waved them away.

"Shoo! Don't bother my Little Horny when he's resting. He's just eaten!"

The lambs went off and began grazing close by.

Very soon the grey lamb stopped nibbling grass, all he wanted was oats and bread.

But Aziz was happy, he loved his pet. He would play with him all day long. He even taught him to butt.

The grey lamb grew big and strong. And his horns grew, too.

This is what happened one day. Aziz was lying on the grass near the flock when he suddenly heard a strange noise behind him. It was Little Horny who had rushed at a black lamb. The black lamb could not fight back, he had no horns.

Aziz was overjoyed.

"Good boy, Horny!" he said. "You'll be the strongest lamb in my flock."

He caught another lamb and placed him facing Horny, to make them butt each other. Horny caught on at once and butted the other lamb hard.

Aziz's father looked at the empty grain sack one day and said to his son:

"Stop feeding the horned lamb oats. He's already bigger than any of them. We need the oats for sick lambs."

Aziz frowned.

"Then why did you give them to me? If you're sorry to see him eat oats, I can give him my food."

His father did not like what he said but he did not want to argue.

Soon Horny grew still bolder. He was always ready to butt any lamb in sight. He butted all of them. One day he attacked Snowball.

Snowball did not want to fight, he looked at Aziz, expecting help. But Aziz only patted Horny's back. Then Snowball left the small flock and joined the lambs that were out with Aziz's father. And he never came back.

By winter Horny had become the strongest and bravest of all the lambs. He was not even afraid of attacking dogs.

Horny Loses His Horns

One day Aziz set off with Horny to visit a neighbour's flock. There he met his friend, Sultan.

"Have you got a lamb with horns? Because if you do, let him try butting mine," Aziz boasted, holding his pet by the horns.

Sultan shook his head.

"D'you want him to butt you?"

"Let him try, if he can," Sultan said.

"Don't cry later!" Aziz turned the lamb towards Sultan, saying: "Sic him, Horny, sic him!"

Horny backed up and dashed at Sultan. Sultan fell in the snow, yelling, "Stop! Don't!"

Aziz shooed Horny away. "Well? Now d'you believe he can butt?"

"Sure," Sultan replied, brushing off the snow. "Come back with Horny tomorrow. I'll find him a good match. We can set them against each other."

The next morning, after his father had taken the lambs out to pasture, Aziz took Horny to visit Sultan again.

Sultan asked him to wait. He disappeared into the shed and drove out a big white ram with heavy, twisting horns.

Aziz shook his head.

"Oh, no! He's a big ram, and mine's only a lamb."

Sultan ran over and grabbed Aziz by the arm.

"Don't worry! He can't really butt, he's too old."

Indeed, the ram turned away slowly. He did not want to fight.

"They all give in to my Horny," Aziz thought. "Maybe he really can beat that old ram!"

He let the lamb loose and cried:

"Sic him, Horny! Sic him!"

Horny flew at the white ram and butted him in the side several times. At first the ram did not pay any attention to him. Then he grew angry, fixed the lamb with his wicked red eyes and lowered his big horns.

The lamb backed up, then leaped at the crooked-horned ram, hitting him hard. The same moment his little horns became snagged in the big horns of the ram. No matter how hard they tried, they could not break apart.

Then the ram really got angry. Before the boys could come to their rescue, the old ram raised the lamb high in the air and began to shake him. There was a loud crack, and the lamb was tossed aside.

Aziz ran over to his pet. Horny was lying on the ground. His head was bleeding, his horns were gone.

Aziz burst into tears, he shouted at the white ram and his master, but what was the use?

He had to carry the wounded lamb home.

When Aziz came to his father in tears he was told:

"You're to blame, son. You shouldn't have spoiled the lamb, let alone teaching him to butt. He might have even attacked or crippled you. Don't cry. Be glad your lamb has lost his horns. He'll be better off now. He'll be more tame."

Aziz's mother came out of the tent, picked up the lamb and said she would take it back to the big flock the next day. "He'll get well quickly there. But he'll never do any more butting."

Aziz's father put his hand on his son's shoulder.

"Time to get to work, son. Today we drive the flock to a new pasture. Do you think your lambs can keep up with the others?"

"Sure they can," Aziz said. "And this time I'll really look after them, Dad. Honest!"

TO OUR YOUNG ENGLISH READERS

Dear Reader,

Shukurbek Beyshenaliev, a well-known Soviet author, wrote this book. He is a Kirghiz and lives in Kirghizia, one of the southern republics of the Soviet Union. He has written many books and stories about his native land for children and for grown-ups.

Did you enjoy reading this book? Progress Publishers will be glad to hear from you or your parents.

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РОГАТЫЙ ЯГНЕНОК

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